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UNTO THE SELF

Autobiograhy

Kalaignar Mu.Karunanithi

Excerpts from Book I

PART II OF BOOK I OF UNTO THE SELF
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FIFTY ONE

The miserable conditions of the prisoners would always make me think if I would sometime be able to do something for their betterment. But I had never foreseen that the Kazhagam would one day become the ruling party and Anna and myself would ever become Chief Ministers.

As soon as the Kazhagam was vested with the powers of the government in 1967, the erstwhile prisoners that we had been, we were enthusiastic about reforms in the prison.

We have brought about quite a few changes towards the better during the past five years.

‘C’ class prisoners have been permitted to use soap, oil, toothpaste, toothbrush and talcum powder at their own expense. They have also been permitted to receive letters as well as write letters besides having been permitted to meet visitors. Thus differences in the status between prisoners of various classes were considerably reduced.

The ‘A’ class and ‘B’ class prisoners have been permitted to read newspapers, weeklies and monthlies that are duly approved by the Superintendents. Additional food is served to the prisoners in the Central Jail and the Borstal Schools on Pongal days.

The jail terms were reduced in varying degrees to many prisoners on the occasion of the Second World Tamil Conference. 2784 prisoners were released and the term of another 11488 prisoners was reduced. A book of poems written by the prisoners was brought out under the title, *Sirai Tharum Then Kavithai.* (The Poems Sweet like Honey from the Jail)

A creche and a nursery were built to take care of the children of the women prisoners at Vellore. Fans of palmyra leaves were provided to the prisoners during summer. They were also provided with facilities to play carom and chess during their leisure time. The prisoners were taken to appear for government examinations at the expense of the government. The boys at the Borstal School were permitted to sit for SSLC Examinations. All the prisoners were permitted to read monthlies and retain them for as long as they needed. The only condition was that they should be respectable magazines. Dinamani, Suthesamithran and Navamani were subscribed to at the rate of one copy for every hundred prisoners. This facility was extended to the Sub Jails also. The prisoners were permitted to buy lottery tickets too. Three had won prizes.

Again, the term of imprisonment was reduced in varying degrees on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of Gandhi’s birthday. 2687 prisoners were released and 9561 prisoners were benefited. As per the decision of the Government of India, those who had been sentenced to death were imprisoned for life. This enabled 111 prisoners escape from death.

An open air jail was established in an extent of 114 acres at Nilagiri near Thanjavur. Though there is minimum watch kept over prisoners in the open air jail, no one has attempted to escape from them so far. The prisoners there are enthusiastically engaged in digging wells, land reclamation, ploughing and cultivation. They are provided with an additional 50 grams of rice a day. They are also paid wages at the rate of 25 paise per

day. Six working days entitle them to a remission of one day. They are given 50 grams of oil and 45 grams of shihakai powder every month for taking oil bath.

After assuming office as the Chief Minister I wanted them to have the benefit of educational programmes broadcast over the radio. So new radio receivers have been supplied to the Central Jails at Coimbatore, Salem and Chennai.

To make the wooden furniture manufactured in the jail cheaper, local varieties of wood were seasoned in a plant newly bought. Substitution of the local varieties of wood for teak reduced the cost considerably.

Rupees Thirty Six Thousand was sanctioned to the Borstal school at Pudukkottai to establish a carpentry shop.

The procurement of a lathe for the Aluminium workshop at Salem Central Jail reduced the cost of production of aluminium vessels and also increased production.

Those who had completed 15 year term in the prison were released on Anna's 61st birthday on 15.09.69. Twenty one were benefited.

Some of the boys at the Borstal School, Pudukkottai were sent to an Industrial Training institute every day. They were also sanctioned fifty four rupees each for buying books.

Modern lavatories at a cost of Rs.2,69,000 have been built at Pudukottai Borstal School, as well as the central jails at Salem and Trichy and a few subjails.

Remissions, wages, beedies, oil and shikakai powder have been sanctioned to the prisoners working in the three open air prisons and those engaged in digging wells at Madhavaram Dairy Unit.

All the prisoners in the various subjails have been permitted to buy soap, oil, cigarettes, beedies and tobacco. The prisoners in the subjails have been sanctioned 28 grams of sesamum oil and 28 grams of *shihakai* powder each every month. The convict warders in all the Central Jails have been provided with a separate kitchen and dining hall. They have also been permanently assigned to them. Half a bar of washing soap is supplied to each prisoner in the central and subjails. The inhuman practice of handcuffing the prisoners inside the prison has been banned.

The Government of Tamilnadu have sanctioned Rs.2,28,200 to build modern toilets in the Central Jails at Vellore, Palayamkottai, Coimbatore and the special subjails for men at Salem and Kokkirakkulam in another three years. Another Rs.3,20,600 has been

sanctioned for the Central Jail at Chennai. The government is also considering proposals to build such toilets at the Central Jail at Cuddalur. Since very good medical facilities are available for leprosy at Vellore Central Jail, lepers from other prisons are transferred to Vellore. Cooks have been appointed at Central Jails and the Barstal schools. To provide the prisoners with facilities for education, a night school has been started at Vellore Central Jail for the first time. The educated prisoners have been used as teachers. Classes are conducted between 7 and 9 PM. Examinations are conducted every three months.

There is a ban on appointing the convicts in government jobs. But to rehabilitate ex-convicts, this ban has been lifted. Taking into consideration the circumstances in which they had committed crimes, the government has provided for employment opportunities in deserving cases. Thus those who had been released from the prison have now employment opportunities in the government service.

FIFTY THREE

Anna had at times been angry with me. He had spent weeks and months without having a word with me because of his displeasure.

Such displeasure had been incurred by me not because I had not properly attended to the affairs of the Kazhagam or because of any mistake on my part. I would at times incur his fond anger when I had to express opinions contrary to those of Anna regarding the extent of intensity of a struggle to be launched or the strategies thereof. But he had never loved me an iota less during those days of his displeasure.

Anna’s strategy for Kallakkuti struggle had been only to paste a poster with the name Kallakkuti on the board that bore the name Dalmiyapuram. He had instructed us to stop the train pulling the chain. But when the police ignored me and did not choose to arrest me as soon as I pasted the paper on the board, I devised an action on the spot. That was to lie across the rails. The others followed suit.

Though Anna had been very much moved by the consequent police firing, the loss of two lives and the six months imprisonment imposed on me, he had explicitly expressed his displeasure over my sudden action plan. Some of the important functionaries in the Kazhagam thought that it was the right moment to create a wedge between Anna and myself. They even attempted at it.

They did not understand that Anna had been explicit with his anger lest I should go further in my unrestrained enthusiasm; he had not been that very displeased with what I had done. They also underestimated Anna's fondness for the radicals within the Kazhagam. They appeared to be successful in widening the gap between us but ultimately they themselves fell off.

Gandhi mentioned one thing in his important speech at a meeting of the All India Congress held in Wardha in 1942. It was in that meeting that he had declared Nehru as his political successor.

"Some people say that Nehru and myself have become foes. Differences of opinion by themselves are not enough to create displeasure between us. They say that Jawaharlal does not understand my language nor do I understand his. But if the hearts were one what could differences of opinion do? I know that he will speak my language when I am gone".

Such were Gandhi's words. I place Anna in the place of Gandhi. But I cannot even imagine myself in the place of Nehru. But that there can be differences of opinion between a leader and his follower and that no one, however skillful he may be, can further any animosity between them if their hearts have become one, have best been illustrated by Gandhi in his speech at Wardha - I keep thinking so quite often.

Differences of opinion should arise in the interest of the party. They should spring in the interest of how to promote the party's interests. It is natural for differences to arise on the basis of what one has done to the party and what is to be done. Such differences in fact are to be encouraged. Such differences can never cause any split in the party.

But thoughts about what the party has done to one and what more is to be done are not to be encouraged. They arise on the basis of selfishness. They would never promote the interests of the party.

Gandhi answered the criticism that his movement of noncooperation had in no way shook the British government, with the following words: "The speed, course and direction the movement has taken pleases me. I do not want it to be faster. It will gain momentum in its own nonviolent way. Miracles do not occur just because people wish miracles to happen".

Anna had insisted of a similar thought during the programmes of the Kazhagam. Though people like me felt impatient and were exasperated by such sentiments, we came round in course of time and expressed solidarity with Anna.

FIFTY NINE

The propaganda of the Kazhagam was strengthened. The meetings addressed by the leaders of the Kazhagam attracted crowds of people in many thousands. New offices of the Kazhagam started appearing in the nooks and corners of Tamilnadu. The list of members exceeded a lakh. The propaganda of the party was carried out very intensely with the writings in the newspapers and magazines, speeches in public meetings, interesting programmes on the stage and propagandist plays.

The people had understood the real colours of the Congress. They had declared that they would take care of the welfare of the people when they ascended the seats of power. But soon, they forgot their promises to the people and became the fond children of the wealthy. They ruled autocratically over the poor and the common man. The people had seen for themselves the breach of trust on the part of the Congress and understood that the functionaries of the Kazhagam were expressing their own sentiments. Their sympathies with the Kazhagam grew and they started liking the cadres of the Kazhagam.

Anna and the other leaders of the Kazhagam took up whirlwind tours throughout Tamilnadu. The propaganda of the Kazhagam had unmasked the Congress. Thalaivar Kamaraj could not bear with it and challenged the Kazhagam.

"The Kazhagam whose people talk on the streets with no canopy or roof above their heads do not have the sympathies of the people. If they have the public behind them, are they prepared to enter the Assembly and speak there?"

Kamarajar reared this challenge of his in many meetings that he addressed. Anna's answer had been humorous, interesting but very deep.

"A woman was selling flowers at the entrance of a temple. She teased a Sanyasi who went by the way, asking him when he would marry. He was good enough to pass her by in silence. Encouraged by his silence, she teased him with the same question whenever he happened to pass by. If a woman were to tease a man, will he not lose his patience even if the were a Sanyasi?

"One day he retorted "Marriage? Oh, I am ready, Are you?" The challenge of Kamaraj is like unto it. He is asking us if we could, if we would gain entry into the Assembly. The Kazhagam may one day have to give Kamaraj the sanyasi's answer to the flower seller."

The Congress was working on elaborate preparations for the 1957 General Elections. Meanwhile the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam held its State Conference at Trichy in 1956. The Conference which was attended by lakhs of people marked a turning point in the history of the Kazhagam. Navalar Nadunchezhian who had been elected the General Secretary of the Kazhagam presided over the Conference. Many spoke in appreciation of the presidential address. Anna's speech was very short.

"Thambi va! Thalaimai erka va! un anaikkuk kattuppattu natakkirom! va!"

(Thambi, you are welcome. Come forth to assume leadership. We would obey your commands! Please come forward!).

That was Anna's speech. Later, at the end of the Conference, Anna elaborated on his short speech. "He may be my younger brother. But once we all have jointly elected him the General Secretary, we have to obey his commands and respect his office. Only then will there be discipline taken care of within the party. I have taken upon myself the custom of respecting leadership for long in my political career". The dignified words of Anna still keep ringing in my heart.

Anna raised a new question to the public in the Conference. "Shall the Kazhagam which is a seven year old child contest the General Elections?". This was the question on which Anna called for votes, with "ayes" and "nays".

Many polling booths were immediately arranged around the venue of the Conference. Two boxes were kept at the entrance. One box was meant for the 'ayes' and the other for the 'nays'. The people who had assembled for the Conference expressed their opinions through the ballot. The votes were counted on the appointed day. Only a few thousands were against contesting the elections. More than a lakh of votes were cast in favour of contesting the elections.

Anna had sought a democratic answer to the question if Kazhagam should participate in the democratic elections. He then declared that the Kazhagam would field candidates during the 1957 General Elections. It was a historic declaration. The cadres, functionaries

and the leaders of the Kazhagam left at the end of the Conference taut to face the new challenge.

The rains atop the hills take the form of great rivers and branch out into smaller rivers which in turn flow through canals to make lands fertile. So also did the great confluence of people at the Conference reached the nooks and corners of Tamilnadu and expounded the sentiments expressed at the Trichy Conference to add now strength to the Kazhagam.

Then arose the question of who would be the candidates from where for the 1957 General Elections. I expressed my desire to contest from the Nagerkoil constituency of the Thanjavur District. Anna who heard me said, "Go and assess the constituency first", and sent me on the mission.

There was just another week to announce the list of the candidates of the Kazhagam. Meanwhile I had to go round the Nagerkoil constituency and assess the situation. The people I met in all places there were in support of my candidacy. I visited the constituency leaving no village behind and finally addressed a meeting of the cadres at Negarkoil. In the midst of a wild applause, I declared that I would contest from the constituency. I was sent back to Chennai with cheers.

I could not sleep that night during my journey from Nagerkoil to Chennai. I kept on thinking about my chances against the Congress at the Negarkoil constituency. I reached Chennai by about 9 AM and went forthwith to meet Anna at Arivakam.

Anna was still in his bed at Arivakam. Navalar and NVN were there. *Nam Nadu* was being despatched. It contained the list of candidates. I took a copy anxiously. Kulithalai had been assigned to me. I looked at those around me and said, "I have declared that I would contest from the Nagerkoil Assembly Constituency. But the decision is different here. What am I to do?" N.V.N said that Anna had thought for long before taking the decision. Where can there be an appeal on a decision arrived at by Anna himself?

Since Anna himself had assigned Kulithalai constituency to me, I informed people at Nagarcoil about Anna’s decision and started working on the preparations to contest from Kulithalai. Anna contested from Kancheepuram; Sathiyavanimuthu from Perambur; Perasiriyar Anbazhagan from Egmore; Asaithambi from Thousand Lights; Pa.Vu. Shanmugam from Thiruvannamalai and A.Govindasamy from Valavanur: More than a hundred candidates of the Kazhagam contested the General Elections.

I visited Kulithalai constituency which had suddenly been declared as mine. The constituency can be described as a stalk of sugarcane. Kulithalai Block was as sweet as the lower stalk of sugarcane. Mayanur Block was a little less fertile like the middle of the stalk. Vellianai Block was like the top of the stalk, full of sharp and stinging leaves. Can one always keep thinking of the sweeter part in the case of an election? You can march to victory only if you taste the stalk as a whole, you see.

To taste the stalk of sugarcane from the top to the bottom is indeed a delicate affair and is a test to one's patience. Still I had a taste of the whole of Kulithalai constituency and started my electioneering task. I was then thirty three years of age.

The electioneering work begun in 1957 marked the beginning of my political contribution to the state.

I considered that I had reached a significant stage in my career when I readied myself to contest the elections from Kulithalai constituency as desired by Anna and to fulfill my obligation to democracy. Till then I had been a propagandist trying to awaken a political sense among the people. But then I had taken shape as a politician representing people in the Legislative Assembly. Is it not then a significant stage? When I recall what embarrassment it caused to me and a few others like me in the Kazahagam, I could not help but laugh aloud.

We had been blearing like bugles for many hours a day with the strength of Anna behind us dedicating ourselves to the service of the movement.

"Come forth all of you to shoulder with me the responsibility of ensuring the dignity of Mother Tamil and bear with any loss thereof".

"Lend me and our movement your support to defeat the proud oppressors who had crept into power when we were a little careless."

"File past behind me to rout the evil of wants, insufficiency and poverty".

"Let each one of you be ashamed for having fallen off our dignified position in the name of caste and religion".

Those of us who had thus proudly proclaimed the policies of the Kazhagam were greatly embarrassed to go round and request every voter to vote for us. "I contest the election. Please cast your vote in favour of me." The electioneering work also provided us with a new experience.

The daily speeches that Anna made and his explanations as to the why and wherefore of contesting the elections went a long way in reducing my embarrassments considerably. To make short of a long story, I could say that it was Kamaraj's challenge and Anna's exasperation at the reiterated challenge that pushed us into the field of the elections.

Most of us were wondering what we were to achieve, winning the elections. That was because the Government of Tamilnadu was conducted like a post office unto the Delhi Government. The authority to order anything about was still stagnant at Delhi. The politics of Kamaraj and the vain stubbornness of the Congress government over here were really exasperating.

It was a time when the step-motherly attitude on part of the Delhi Government was explicitly manifest. It was a time when even a hostile look at Pandit Nehru was considered a treason. Most of the radicals in the Kazhagam and those who had voted against the Kazhagam contesting the elections looked at electioneering as vain attempts to plough on the waters of the sea. If we were to look closely at the prevalent situation, their sentiments were of course well founded.

Bulkanin and Kruschev had been on a visit to India in 1955. They had said, "The southern part of India in industrially backward. Therefore that part of the country should be assigned priority to our aids. We would lend money and extend support for an aluminium plant at Salem in the proposed Soviet Aid Programme to India." But no one knew what decision the Government of India had taken on the Russian proposals.

C.T.Deshmuk who was considered a great economist of the day had paid a visit to Udhagamandalam in July 1956. He regretted, saying, "The per capita expenditure for industrial development throughout India is Rs.27/-. But the expenditure at Madras State remains at the rate of only Rs.19. There are instances of more than five to six times the national ratio spent in a few States in the North."

We could not forget the regretful words of Thirumathi Ambujam Ammal in her welcome address at the Avadi Congress which was convened with much of fanfare. It was in January 1955, "We opine that this State had not been accorded its due in creating major industries and projects".

The people in the Kulithalai constituency themselves told me that the great industrialist of the day Anantharamakrishnan also had regretted as follows in a meeting held at Trichy : "The south has been very badly neglected in the field of industrial development."

"The Department of Industries and Commerce at Delhi dictates what is to be done and what not in the Madras State. The Government of Madras is tethered to the tape of the petticoat of the Central Government." - This was the text of a notice sent to all politicians in Tamilnadu by Rosch Victoria of Thuthukkuti on 1st September 1956 though he had at that time been the Minister for Food in the Congress Government and a very important Congress leader of the day.

This notice created quite a rustle during the 1957 elections. Rosch Victoria's family name was exploited by Anna when he wrote an open letter in the *Thambikku matal* section of the *Dravida Nadu* with the title *"sukasthana vasi"*.

In such a situation, not only the radicals in the Kazhagam but also ourselves were disturbed by the question, "What are we going to achieve with our entry into the Assembly?"

But now I look back. What has not been achieved by the movement because of its entry into poll politics? When and how had Anna's political honesty and farsightedness gone wrong?

The Kazhagam has been in politics for sixteen years. It is six years since the Kazhagam has been on the treasury bench. Even now, there are a few unresolved problems. The foremost of them is the distinction between State authority and the authority of the Central Government. It has remained a matter of controversy till date.

I have taken up a few efforts towards resolving this problem with the basic lessons in politics that Anna had taught me and the fond hope that the cadres of the Kazhagam and the people of the country are by my side. The unstinting support of the people and the drifting time alone can find a fitting solution to this problem.

SIXTY TWO

Though fifteen of us had won the elections, Kamaraj and the Communists changed their tunes and propaganda. They said, "We are 150. They are only 15. What can they do?" C.Subramaniam who was then the Finance Minister also ridiculed us. "These fifteen will be taken care of even by our women members". But Anna's assessment was different.

"They ridicule us saying that only 15 have won the elections. They laugh at us. They indulge in debates regarding if the victory of the Kazhagam had been considerable or not. I would like to tell them something. Though we have won only a less number of seats, our victory is significant indeed." Such was his speech at the felicitation meeting at Chennai.

Anna made those who ridiculed us keep their mouths shut with the retort, "No ridiculing us saying that only 15 have won. We will set an example for the whole of India as to how a good opposition party should function". He asked of the lakhs of people who had assembled on the beach for the felicitation meeting, "Who else but those of the Kazhagam who have become used to both stone and speech attacks can function as the opposition party?"

Moreover Anna's speech that day resounded with the passion of Lenin when the Revolution against the Czars was declared in 1905. "Those who ridicule us should speak to make us feel ashamed. That is my earnest request. Call us, 'You who had foregone your deposits in forty constituencies '. Only then our enthusiasm will swell; our strength grow."

What further could the voices of ridicule say to the born leader that Anna had been who had taken the defeat as means to enthuse the cadres of his party?.

"I would like to remind those on the treasury bench that though 15 of us are in the Assembly, there are the hearts of 17 lakhs behind us. So also I would like to tell the Kazhagam cadres that our victory is by no means an ordinary event. We have shouldered a great responsibility. We should not forget that the eyes of the others are now on us".

Who can play the role of Anna who answered at one and the same time those who ridiculed us that we were only fifteen and those who had been wearied by the fact that we were only fifteen?

After the elections, criticism arose from many different quarters about the victory of the Kazhagam. Many such remarks hailed from those who were well-wishers of the Kazhagam and were expressed with real concern.

"There was a certain dignity about the meetings conducted by them. The speakers did not indulge in vituperation. They refuted even Periyar who had been constantly attacking them, with due respect. People were surprised. There will be a new awareness in the

Assembly too. The question answer sessions would be more pertinent. The people would be carefully watching Anna for his words. Everything towards the welfare of the Tamils would be taken care of. We welcome Annadurai's victory in those respects. The members of the ruling party, we hope, would extend a warm welcome to them" - that was the remark in the 17.3.1957 issue of the *Ananda Vikatan.*

The *Tamil Nadu* and the *Kalki* who were not sympathetic towards the victory of the Kazhagam and leaders of the various parties appreciated the victory of the Kazhagam. These appreciations made the Kazhagam cadres reconcile themselves to the situation, saying, "Nothing has been lost though only 15 of us have won".

Whether the members of the ruling party extended a warm welcome to the members of the Kazhagam as desired by *Ananda Vikatan* was better known through the many incidents that took place later on. But one thing was sure : democracy and parliamentary culture took a new life.

After the elections, the meeting of the members of the Legislative Assembly from the Kazhagam was convened at Arivakam on 31.3.1957.

Arignar Anna became the Leader, Anbazhakan the Deputy Leader, myself the party Whip and a Govindasamy along with M.P.Subramaniam the Secretaries of the Legislative party. Sathiyavanimuthu was elected the Treasurer.

That evening there was a felicitation meeting on the beach with Navalar presiding over. The happiness of the people who had assembled overflowed the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Their happiness and the sense of hope on their faces reminded us of our responsibilities and in a way threatened us. Thereafter there had been a chain of felicitation meetings throughout Tamilnadu. The people of Tamilnadu gathered in lakhs to have a look at the successful candidates of the Kazhagam with surprise and wonder.

On the one hand we had been those who stood against the Congress on many issues. On the other hand we had also won against the Congress candidates - which were both surprising and wondrous to them. Such had been the fear-psychosis created by the brutal strength of the Congress and their atrocities during the electioneering. In all the felicitation meetings we had been insisting upon the necessity for forces to join hands against the arrogance of the Congress and the antidemocratic trends of the Communists.

What surprised us more in those days was the way the Communists bore themselves more than the Congress.

Even comrade Ramamoorthy, one of the important leaders of the Communists, and who had been respected by us had then been speaking in terms of unfounded and imagined charges against the Kazhagam. He had even been telling people the conscientious lie that the Kazhagam had taken one lakh rupees from Pakistan to contest the elections. He had been saying so because the Kazhagam had been demanding lesser expenditure on defences and more allocations for development schemes. Not only that; he described the attempt of the Kazhagam to take part in the elections comparing it to an attempt to board a moving train.

Anna and all of us were worried over the fact that instead of joining together against the arrogance of the Congress, the opposition parties were attacking each other in terms of false charges. While such had been the trend of the Communists in Tamilnadu, the first Communist government against the Congress in the whole country was formed in Kerala. It was only the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam who were the first to feel happy about it.

More than the Communists, it was the Kazhagam cadres who had appreciated the people of Kerala for having caused the first scratch on the arrogant Congress rampart. It saddened us to see the Communists in Tamilnadu who had been spending their days in propaganda against the Kazhagam though it was pointed out to them that with just 10 lakh votes the Communists had come to power in Kerala while the Kazhagam obtained only 15 seats with 15 lakh votes. If Arignar Anna himself had been driven to speak about the Communists in strong terms, one can understand the nature of their propaganda against the Kazhagam.

Anna spoke at Ponmalai on 24.4.57:

"There is no necessity for the Kazhagam to answer the charges of the Communists or to write about their false propaganda. I had said that Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is the real Communist party when Malankov was the Premier of Russia. The Communists are shortly to tread our paths, by virtue of having formed the government at Kerala.

"Right at the beginning, we see the high-handed interference of the Centre there (Kerala). As this would continue, the crisis would become worse; they would resign from the ministry and would certainly oppose the Constitution of India.

"Since it is the best practice of the Communists to commit themselves on wrong assessments only to retrace their steps realising the truth for what it is, I request them to correct themselves at the earliest".

True. In accordance with Anna’s reading of the situation the way in which the Congress interfered with the administration of the Communist ministry at Kerala, the toppling of the ministry and the way the Communists came out of their illusion were all there to be witnessed later on.

I refer to this in the present context because the thinking of the Communists of Tamilnadu of late has started reflecting their 1957 trends, if the change in their tone is any indication.

The functioning of the Kazhagam in the Legislative Assembly had been so good that the Congress and the Communists who ridiculed us had to regret later. The culture and propriety that were to emerge subsequent to the entry of the Kazhagam into the Legislative Assembly were best illustrated right at Anna’s words on 30.4.57 felicitating Krishna Rao who was elected the Speaker. Yes, every word that Anna uttered that day was a priceless piece of diamond. His utterances are to be memorised by all in the history of parliamentarian procedures.

Anna’s speech had an admixture of a sense of duty, dignity and discipline; humanism and the enthusiasm for as well as determination in democratic principles.

"Democracy in our country is still in its infant stage. We are new to this kind of bodies of parliamentarian procedures. You should put us in the right track ordering us with a smile: You should make seasoned parlimentarians of us. These are the days when we need nobility to a great extend in the politics of the country. Nobility in politics is a matter of a two-way exchange and not one of one-way dealing.

"We see in our trains those who come early refusing a seat to those who come thereafter. The situation is almost similar in politics. We have somehow managed to board the train of the Legislative Assembly.

"We find those who have occupied a large space lying at their ease. They should recognise us as legitimate travellers and make room to us too. They should not wait for us to demand a seat for us. You should make them do so. That is my request to you".

Who accommodated the Kazhagam later on, in accordance with this request is a different matter. But the humility, the sense of right and determination that expressed themselves in the first speech of Arignar Anna provided the basis for our functioning in the Assembly during the next five years.

Barnel in 1880 told his followers, "The Englishman can understand only one thing, oppose him," Anna also had a similar opinion of the Congress. Barnel dared to oppose the English with arms on hand. Anna tried to defeat the Congress with his intellect.

The credit of having had the political wisdom to understand that the Congress which stood in opposition to the English man who could understand only opposition had come to absorb much of the English character into its own blood.

Citing history, seeking justice in the name of parliamentarian procedures to say what even an ordinary man can understand, to the Congress and make them realise - all these had consistently failed with the Congress. That was why Anna adapted Barnell's strategy; he opposed Congress with the support of the people and sought to strike at the fountainhead of the arrogance of Congress, the official seal to its improper activities, the feeding source of its autocracy - power in the legislative bodies.

It was this opposition that made the Congress and Kamaraj read the situation for what it really was. The Congress and Kamaraj could not take for granted or tolerate the entry of the 15 of the Kazhagam into the Assembly and their attempts at provocative and probing questions into their misdeeds, steeped as they had been in the accumulated powers of the government. The very next day after having been sworn in and Anna had delivered his speech, their questions began: "Who are you? What is the name of your party?".

"Change your party name first and speak about national politics and constitutional details. The very name of your party begins with the title of a region much against national integration"- such were the vague tunes harped upon by Kamaraj in general and C.Subramaniam in particular.

Those who had said "What's there in a name?" when the Kazhagam raised its voice during the Kallakkuti struggle and when it was demanded that the State be called Tamilnadu, started saying, "The name of your party does not sound good!" such was their hollow political philosophy.

In less than a few days, we understood the poisonous nature of the speeches made by the members of the Congress referring to the word "Dravida" in the name of the Kazhagam.

Most of the days of our political life had been spent sweetly in the sense of pride associated with the word which preserved the tradition and glory of the Tamils for 2000 years. We regretted that the Congress could not appreciate the indescribable happiness that we as well as our people come to experience when uttering the word.

Arignar Anna did not speak much on the controversial subject and confined himself to, "We are ordinary people. So also is our party an ordinary party. Likewise is its name". We knew that though the Congress was not ashamed to ask us to change the name, their words fell like poison into the ears of the people. The ordinary name of the Kazhagam has accomplished miracles in this country. How wonderful are the sense of right and the reform in the parliamentary procedures that the name is associated with!

The problem related to the name of the party raised in 1957 when the Kazhagam made its first entry into the Legislative Assembly was raised by a few in 1967 when the Kazhagam formed the ministry. When I think of it, I understand that there are quite a few who are concerned more with shadowing the name of the party than even the party.

Whenever this problem of changing names is spoken about, I am reminded of the speeches made in the conference convened those days for bringing about social reforms and the names of the great heroes recalled in those speeches.

Voltaire had once somehow gained entry into the dinner hosted by Lord Rohen and was incessantly talking to the guests. Lord Rohen noticed him and asked someone, "Who is the young man? he goes on talking!" Voltaire himself is said to have come forward and answered him. "I do not hold any title nor do I have a noble background. But I believe that my ordinary name by itself would bring me all the respect due to nobility. I am Voltaire".

Such words uttered by an ordinary citizen to a nobleman of France was taken for treason. Just as the declaration of his own name by Voltaire was considered treason by the arrogance of power, the arrogant politicians here cry that the very name of the party is treasonable. Voltaire had the confidence of winning the respect and regards of the whole world with his ordinary name. We had entered the Legislative Assembly with the confidence that the Kazhagam would affix its glorious seal on the democracy of the

country with its ordinary name and withstand the onslaughts. We also worked ceaselessly in the public front.

SIXTY SIX

Our hearts were of course throbbing in grief at the great loss in the death of Kalaivanar. But we had to wipe the tears away to attend to a more urgent work. Hindi which took to its heels from Tamilnadu twenty years ago in 1938-39 because of the vehement opposition of the public once again tried to enter Tamilnadu with reinvigorated force.

Everyone was aware of the provision in the Constitution of India which stated that in fifteen years, by 1965, Hindi would replace English wherever it was. This provision had been incorporated by the majority of one vote only. The people of the non-Hindi speaking states had been expressing their dissent frequently.

The Gher Committee was constituted to go into the extent to which Hindi had been imposed on the various departments of the Government and educational institutions; in what ways could the imposition of Hindi be hastened and in which departments could be introduced in lightning speed. The Committee had submitted its proposals. The Kazhagam expressed its serious condemnation of the report of the Committee and the proposals therein. But when the Hindi fanatics in the Central Government endeavoured to carry on with their schemes to impose Hindi as quickly as possible, the Kazhagam decided to talk to the people about it and mobilise their support to defeat their designs.

The important aspect of Hegel’s philosophy is considered to be, "History is like a wheel. It will repeat itself." Whether he is right or not, the history of 1937 Hindi Agitation did repeat itself in Tamilnadu in 1957. Like the Greeks who opposed with added strength every time the Parthians attacked them, the Kazhagam was determined to prevent Hindi from entering Tamilnadu with a greater strength than in 1937.

A Conference against Hindi was held on 21 September 1957 at Thiruvannamalai. The Declaration of Independence of America at Philadelphia on 4 July 1776 still enthuses the lovers of democracy throughout the world; till date Lenin’s declaration at Petrograd on 7 November 1917 enthuses the suppressed working class. So also the activities and resolutions of the 21 September 1957 Conference against Hindi provides us with the strength and enthusiasm in our struggle against Hindi, till date. The greatness of Tamil was hailed far louder than it had been in the three great *Sankams* of Tamil.

Political strategies then were more seriously discussed than during the days of the *Chola, Chera* and *Pandya* Kings.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that all the schemes, strategies and justifications for the struggle against Hindi were formed only at the Thiruvannamalai Conference of September 1957.

Thuravi Arunagiri presided over the Conference; C.V.M.Annamalai of Kancheepuram declared the Conference open; Pa.Vu.Shanmugam was the Secretary of the Reception Committee. The speech made by Anna in the Conference became the Bible to those in the movement against Hindi.

As far as I knew, Anna had never taken such a long time in any other Conference or party programmes. I think of the Thiruvannamalai Conference even today as an indicator of the yield of the passion in opposition that flows in a disciplined manner and with clear thinking. Everyone who spoke on the occasion glittered like a flame. But no heat that could burn anybody came from them. The determination of those people was firmer than the mountain that loomed large in front of us. But in the firmness, there was the culture which did not attempt to stamp down anyone.

The President, who was a sanyasi (thuravi), Arunagiri, said, "I have renounced my home of course. But I have not renounced my motherland, my language, my race. It is my race that provides me with my sustenance, you see!" When he said, "Even the king is but a speck of dust to the renounced; so it is said in Tamil. But even those renounced are slaves unto my mother tongue, Tamil." I wondered if that was the true definition of the renounced or if the greatness of Tamil was such. The very thought made me swell with pride.

I do hope that Tamilnadu would still remember the speeches made by Anna and myself in the Conference. Anna had been categorical in his speech.

"We have only two masters in the world. One is our conscience. The next, the people of this land." The two masters that Anna had referred to that day reign even today over myself and the Kazhagam cadres. We are answerable to none other than these two masters.

It was decided in the Conference to raise our voices in condemnation and mobilise public support against Hindi on 13 October. The whole country knows what triumphs the

Kazhagam earned and what sufferings were caused to the Kazhagam by the struggle against Hindi launched that day during that Conference. The flag we held in our hands against Hindi that day has not been lowered till date. We will fight against Hindi. The superstition about number thirteen is said to have been subscribed to even by the astronauts who landed on the moon. But we will shatter the superstition about the number dedicating unto it the triumphs the Kazhagam had so far earned and is yet to earn subsequent to the struggle launched on the thirteenth.

On the one hand, we were preparing ourselves to vanquish the affliction of Hindi moving from the North like a dog maddened with the desire for sovereignty. On the other hand, the malefic casteism dancing in a frenzy of destruction reared its head from the South and took us by surprise. The South Pandya region of Tamilnadu has contributed greatly both to the pride and honour of the history of Tamilnadu.

SIXTY EIGHT

Tamilnadu looked like a volcano that had erupted subsequent to the decision taken at the Thiruvannamalai Conference which had expressed determination to resist at any cost the imposition of Hindi on the Tamil people.

The meeting conducted on 13 October condemning the imposition of Hindi reflected not only the determination of the Kazhagam but also the will of the people of Tamilnadu at large.

I began my speech at a public meeting in Pethunaickenpettai as follows : "We are today reckoning how many are prepared to oppose Hindi. We are not going to stop with the list. We are not going to declare the end of the agitation at midnight, having given the list. All of us should oppose Hindi firmly and with determination. If not today, Hindi is bound to march upon us. So we should ask ourselves even today if we are prepared for Hindi."

My speech reflected the natural sentiments and anxieties at the thought of what harms might befall my Tamil, living in eternal bloom, having withstood many onslaughts for thousands of years. It was not only myself but all the leaders of the Kazhagam who also expressed similar sentiments in the meeting held on 13 October. The fervour to oppose Hindi again after twenty years overflowed ferociously in all parts of Tamilnadu that day without transgressing limits of discipline and dignity.

After the Conference of the Kazhagam against Hindi and especially after the 13 October Meeting, Tamilnadu became a volcano that had erupted. Not only Hindi which tried to enter Tamilnadu to see the end of Tamil but all other evils afflicting the state were also listed out and presented to the public.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam raised its flag of resistance to Hindi in every hamlet of Tamilnadu. The party led by Ma.Po.Si., *(Tamilarasu Kazhagam)* had camped in the north with the challenge, "We will restore the northern borders of Tamilnadu". After the communal violences in the southern districts, the Dravidar Kazhagam of Periyar announced dates and strategies for a struggle against casteism, having assessed the damages already caused and the dishonour wrought. Even the Communists were subject to an ‘inner struggle’ having witnessed the repressive measures of the Communist China at Tibet. The Congress was also engaged in assessing if the existing provisions of the penal code were enough to tackle the obtaining situation or more provisions were to be made.

Above all, the people were also making a mental calculation of what would have been the extent of safety they would have enjoyed if fifty or sixty instead of fifteen of the Kazhagam had been elected to the Assembly.

We could read such sentiments of the people wherever we went. The miracle of Rajaji himself coming out with, "I would like to reiterate that the struggle against Hindi should not be given up" came to be. The rebellious mood of the 1857-58 struggle throughout India repeated itself exactly a hundred years later in 1957-58.

After the Thiruvannamalai Conference, the Second Conference of the Kazhagam was held on 27,28 December 1957 at the southernmost city of Nagerkoil. The General Council of the Kazhagam also met on 29th at Nagerkoil, subsequent to the Conference.

I understood how well was the Kazhagam filled with the blessings and the will of the Tamils during the Nagerkoil Conference. I can never forget how the people of the Kumari region listened to our speeches that day. They did not mind the pouring rain, the flooding waters, the slippery mud, the trembling cold, the wind that pierced the body like needles. They stood with their characteristic expression of surprise writ large on their faces; they held their umbrellas above their heads; they had their dhothies folded above

the knee - I can never forget the sense of pride with which they listened to our speeches that day.

It was only for that Conference that womenfolk had turned up in such large numbers as never before. E.V.K.Sampath presided over the Conference. But if one were to compare his speech that day with the speeches that he had made a few months hence, one can easily understand how hunger for power renders people contradict themselves. That day he spoke as if the northernmost Delhi was to be laid siege on from the southernmost Nagerkoil.

Sampath spoke, "Nehru speaks taking our tolerance to permit him to go about the country for our weakness." Nehru who had been to Tamilnadu a few days before had spoken insolently of the leaders of Tamilnadu.

Nehru conducted himself like the Roman emperors who chided the Eastern kings. He called Periyar who was conducting a movement towards the eradication of castes, a madcap. He described the agitation of the Kazhagam against Hindi childish. He described the rail-roko of Ma.Po.Si., at the northern borders struggle as an idiotic act.

Nagerkoil Conference considered at length the manner in which Nehru conducted himself going beyond the ambit of the dignity of his position and prestige. It was made clear that the whole of Tamilnadu had been hurt by his speeches. The Kazhagam sought a remedy in a Resolution of the General Council on 29.12.1957.

The resolution read as follows : "It is resolved to stage a black flag demonstration when Nehru visits Chennai during the first week of January to protest against Pandit Nehru’s derogatory remarks against the Tamils and the leaders of Tamilnadu who excel in different departments of life in this State. It is also resolved that the fifteen Kazhagam members of the Legislative Assembly and the two Kazhagam members of the Parliament would lead the demonstrations." The Resolution also called upon all those who had concern for the dignity of Tamilnadu.

The Thiruvannamalai Conference raised its voice against the injustice meted out to Tamilnadu. The subsequent Nagerkoil Conference decided to wipe away the indignity that Tamilnadu had suffered. Tamilnadu has never made a compromise with indignity. History tells us that from the march of Cheran Chenkuttuvan against the kings in the north down to protesting against Nehru’s derogatory remarks, Tamilnadu had fought

many times against indignity of any sort. Tamilnadu had borne with even slavery. But there had been no instance of indignity having been borne with, in the whole history of Tamilnadu. Even Veerapandya Kattabomman rose in such fury more because of a sense of having been insulted than against slavery.

The Tamilian marched upto the Himalayas when Kanakan and Vijayan insulted the Tamils. The remedy to the insulting speeches of Nehru was sought at Chennai itself because Nehru was scheduled to visit Chennai on 6 January. Tamilnadu geared itself up to make good the indignity suffered, by means of the black flag demonstration.

Arignar Anna had stated in his call to the people of Tamilnadu, "Pandit Nehru exhibits a trend of arbitrarily insulting respected persons in unsavoury language. Only the ministers who respectfully carry out his orders escape his scathing tongue. The others, however great they may be, matter so little to him that he goes about slandering them. This time, at a scale that had never before been, we should stage a black flag demonstration in the most disciplined and dignified manner."

The General Secretary of the party, Navalar Nedunchezhian, had said in his message, "The black flag demonstration is a peaceful, democratic means of exhibiting to the world and himself our sense of disgust, dislike and protest to the habits of Nehru. Therefore I request everyone to wave black flags and march with black flags giving no room to any violence, in the most dutiful and dignified manner."

I have quoted both the remarks *verbatim* because I want to show the greatness behind the attempt of the Kazhagam to initiate a new turn in the traditional struggles of the Tamils.

Pandit Nehru was at the topmost of the affairs of the Indian subcontinent. He was the Prime Minister who was described as the one whose little finger could make the Himalayas move. The Kazhagam was quite careful about what a civilised and democratic protest was to be organised against him by the Tamils who had suffered unbearable insults at his hands. Though the Tamil community had borne with a thousand cruelties peacefully, it had been steeped in the culture of raising up in arms on an instance of indignity heaped upon it. The Kazhagam took great efforts to show to the world that indignant treatment could also be met with peaceful protest. But it was only the insulted community that was peaceful. The agents of the persons who insulted them, the Congress ministers, caused bloodshed in the State.

There are many reasons for this black flag demonstration to have remained an indelible memory in my mind. The Kazhagam had so far resorted to many protest movements, black flag demonstrations. But none of them had been taken up in the interest of the party or in advocating the policies of the Kazhagam. This was an incident which endeavoured to teach a lesson to Nehru who had insulted various leaders of Tamilnadu. It was much like how Kanakan and Vijayan were put down by Cheran Chenkuttuvan. The purpose behind the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament being named to lead the programme was to establish that neither the sentiments behind the protest nor the sense of dignity the Tamils were used to were to be taken for granted.

The old woman of the Tamil lore is said to have attempted to sever her breast which had dried up because of age, on hearing that her son had died of a battle-wound on the back. She had been ashamed of having fed a coward. Such had been the sense of dignity of the Tamils. The times were such that the Tamil community was facing a similar problem related to its basic dignity. Arignar Anna was very careful in that the sentiments of the people who belonged to such a tradition should not have their feelings subverted in their protest against such a man like Nehru who was considered to have none to equal him in the country. I consider the black flag demonstration on 6 January 1957 to be equal in stature to the Boston Tea Party in the history of America which was staged because of a sense of having been insulted with taxes levied and representations denied.

We saw Tamilnadu preparing itself to show its protest to Nehru with the black flag demonstration of 6 January. The Kazhagam cadres had started troop after troop to Chennai. The schedule for the day for Nehru had also been unusually crowded with many functions. It was also obvious from the various repressive measures of the Congress government that they desired to put down the Kazhagam, exploiting the emergent situation of agitation.

Having noticed all these, we requested Anna to devise definite strategies and define in clear terms the peace and dignity to be maintained by the Kazhagam cadres during the demonstration. These were to be announced by Anna himself in strict terms a few days before the day of the demonstration, in a public meeting. My comrades also felt the same.

Accordingly, it was decided to hold a meeting on the beach on 3 January and Anna alone was to address the meeting on "Black Flag Demonstration to Nehru". Had the meeting

been conducted, most of the unfortunate incidents of 6 January would have been avoided. But the police had banned the meeting. Had the meeting been held, we would have been instructed appropriately for a peaceful demonstration. Refusal of permission to hold the meeting on the third enraged the Kazhagam cadres. Along with the question of dignity, the question of infringement of the right to speak arose and burnt like a flame in the enraged hearts of the cadres.

Anna came out with a press release: "I am obliged to tell people that the black flag demonstration is to be carried out in the most peaceful and dignified manner. I consider any attempt to stall it to be dictatorial. So I have decided to address the public meeting on the third even if police permission is denied, on the Thiruvallikkeni beach. The General Council has approved of my decision. Whatever may happen, the meeting that day should be conducted in the most peaceful manner with no violence of even the least kind and without any disgust. Whatever be the repressive measures adapted, the Tamils should bear themselves without any tension and anger, without disturbing peace and order. We who accuse Pandit Nehru of improper behaviour should behave properly. Only then would the dignity of Tamilnadu would stand out."

SEVENTY SIX

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam issued a statement to the effect that all kinds of support would be extended to the Prime Minister of India against the Chinese Aggression. But as a token of recognition of the goodwill extended, neither Anna nor the thousands of the Kazhagam cadres were released from the jails.We were all released only after the completion of the terms. This is an example for the despotism of the Congress Government of the day and lack of dignity on their part. Anna who came out of the Vellore jail made his battle cry against the Chinese Aggression right on the grounds outside the jail.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam came forward to extend its total support to the Government of India in the war. Donations were collected in cash and in jewellery towards the War Fund on behalf of the Kazhagam. Navalar and myself went to the house of the Chief Minister Kamaraj and handed over the same to him.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the war waged on India sowed the seeds for political changes in Tamilnadu. The war waged by the Chinese against India was a very important reason behind the circumstances in which Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had to give up its policy declaration of the demand for a separate Dravida Nadu.

The shock of the Chinese invasion echoed at many points and in many departments of life in India. I have read in history about the ripples and consequences of Malik Kabu’s invasion of Tamilnadu. A similar situation prevailed in October 1962.

Napoleon had described China as a sleeping monster. He had also said that if China woke up, the whole world would tremble. Questions like what India was doing when was sleeping are issues related to bitter truths about the history of Imperialism.

But the nuances of Indian policies had contributed greatly to investing China with the speed, energy, strength and confidence to awaken from its sleep. Sanyat-Sen, the hero of the Independence Struggle of China was customarily called the Gandhi of China. So, though China was considered to be free, it had learnt only from India about the indignity of slavery and the uneasiness of a government which had no powers of its though considered to be sovereign.

The spiritual strength of China is said to have grown to its full because of the Buddha of our country. We had also been the important reason forChina to wake up, shaking its manes and shirking away its political sleep, mental delusions and inferiority complex. We ridiculed the Western politicians who described China as a monster.

Our Prime Minister Nehru and all of us with him did just not a little but so much to project China’s image as a harmless state, keeping on saying, "Only in form does it appear to be so terrible. Its heart is larger and broader than its geographical extent". We were stubbornly determined in pleading that peaceful life of the whole world consisted of acknowledging it as a member of the United Nations Organization.

We have suffered considerable losses at the national level also because of this stubbornness. There were times when we daringly believed that the friendship between India and China was as inseparable as the Siamese twins. That too, during the Pandung Conference, the proceedings were such that the Western leaders were confused as to who could be the Premier of China and who the Prime Minister of India.

Even the political platforms in Tamilnadu resounded with, "See how the handiwork of the Communists which fails with the Western industrial workers succeeds with the agricultural labourers in East India." in appreciation of what was happening in China. "Both our greatest and oldest countries have a new objective in founding a new world based on principles of peaceful coexistence." - all of us including Nehru shouted deafeningly. Did we stop with that?

1. working towards peace avoiding war;
2. Respecting the national boundaries of each country;
3. Solving any problem through peaceful negotiations and
4. Remaining neutral without aligning with any of the superpowers who are heaping piles of warfare.

- the whole world believed that our two countries had unanimously agreed on these principles.

We also believed so and considered ourforeign policy to consist of supporting China and not antagonising its friends. We later understood that Nehru alone was not to be considered responsible for this blind faith but that Krishnamenon, who was the mouthpiece of his foreign policy had also a significant role to play.

Besides, what was described by one K.P.S.Menon as the opinion held about India by the Soviet Russia, was responsible for our antagonism towards the Western countries and our blind support to the pro-communist countries of the world.

The sudden Chinese Aggression became a challenge to our humanism as the cumulative result of all these disorders.

All the tall talk about fraternal affection, peaceful coexistence, respect for national boundaries and patience for negotiated settlement of disputes were lost in the noise of the bullet shots on the roof of the world, the Himalayas, on 20 October 1962.

Russia had firmly declined to offer even a word of consolation to India in this regard. Only then did we understand the political poverty of the Communist world.

"If the husband were alright, she could ascend to the roof and quarrel with any one", is a proverb in the folklore of Tamilnadu. Since our rulers at that time were not alright, war broke out right on our roof.

The Chinese had begun their planned aggression in the northwest Indian Ladakh region and the northeast Nefa region.

The whole country was taken aback. Everyone was shocked by the incredible happening. The blame of having been loudmouthed about the national boundaries without strengthening their security stood in all its nakedness right in front of the people.

If the government had listened to the advice of the Kazhagam and Arignar Anna in this regard, we could have at least been adequately prepared to face and defeat the aggression even if we could not have been able to avoid it.

Arignar Anna had always been sympathetic towards Communism. But he had no trust in the Communists. He had always hailed the democrats. He had been fully aware of the limitations and faults inherent to democracy. He had always been greatly enthusiastic about realising the advantages of Communism through democratic processes. The policies of the Kazhagam and our activities have been based till date on the same conviction.

Very few political parties in India at that time had so well understood the nature of the border disputes between India and China as the Kazhagam had. That was why the resolution passed at Madurai in 1961 declared, "This conference strongly condemns the aggression of a few regions at the northern boundary of India on the part of the Communist China much tothe shock of the people of the Indian subcontinent since its has caused disruption of friendly relationship between the two countries in spite of the fact that India had remained neutral in international politics without aligning itself with any of the superpowers, at the same time arguing for China in the United Nations Organization on many occasions."

This was a resolution drafted by Arignan Anna. China was acting in a way to shock the people of the Indian subcontinent; China was creating grounds for disruption of friendly relationship between the two countries; China's act was to be strongly condemned - the Communists in India ridiculed the sentiments expressed in the resolutionof the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam even in 1961, thus reflecting the patriotism interwoven therein. The Congressmen said that it was a resolution passed against Nehru.

The Congress government lacked the dignity to release the leaders of the Kazhagam even after the Chinese Aggression had begun on 20 October, though they had identified China as a country of aggressive tendencies and declared the same fairly in advance.

Nehru’s speech over the radio and on the floor of the Parliament on 22 October 1962 mentioned only what the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had said long before. "The Chinese Aggression has now caused a great danger as never before. The war may be prolonged. We must prepare ourselves psychologically and otherwise for it."

Nehru appeared not only as the betrayed in this speech of his; he also appeared like the one who had slided many steps down the ladder of popularity. Just as the respect of Chamberlaine, the Prime Minister of England, began declining immediately after Hitler marched on Poland, Nehru had fallen into the pitiable position of facing various criticisms.

We should say that all his cherished hopes, the lessons in politics that he had learnt, the fame he had earned and the influence he had preserved tended to go to pieces. He further said in his speech on 22 October, "I truly believe that all the political parties and groups in the country would join together in this situation. I believe that they would give up the quarrels and arguments between each other and unitedly and with determination tackle those who try to jeopardize our independence and honesty." Though he had said so in his speech, he had sent a telegram seeking Anna’s cooperation only to his prison address.

Anna in response to his telegram did not ask, "You do not have the will to release me from the jail. How then do you justify seeking my cooperation?" Alternatively, he had responded by wire, "Thank you for your telegram. I regret my inability to come over to Delhi since I am kept in the jail. I express my confidence in your ability to make use of appropriate means to ease the situation."

Then, in another two days, after completing his term in the prison, after 97 days of imprisonment, Arignar Anna was released from the Vellore jail on 24.10.1962.

That very evening, he firmly declared in very clear terms, giving no room for any ambiguity, what was the attitude of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam towards the problem of the Chinese Aggression, in the meeting organised on the outer grounds of the Vellore fort.

"We would never tolerate the Chinese Aggression. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam would strengthen the hands of Nehru until the Chinese feet of aggression are withdrawn. If we don't like even the one in Delhi, are we likely to like the one from somewhere in Peking?

"Can we keep demanding separation of Dravida Nadu even as the enemy has gained entry through the boundaries of the country? Separation is only after having retrieved the country from enemy aggression. They say that people have not understood anything about the war being fought in the north. How could they understand? They could understand only if it is spoken about by those who should speak."

Yes, only after those who should speak about it - Arignar Anna and the other leaders of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam - had spoken, did the people in Tamilnadu - even those in the north - why, even those in the battlefield - started to understand the implications of the Chinese Aggression clearly.

Two days after the release of Anna from the jail, I was released from the Trichy jail on 26 October. Arignar Anna received me right at the jail gate. It was on the day of my release that Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, the then President of India, declared a state of Emergency in the country. I had completed my jail term.

Anna came to know of the declaration of Emergency only after my release. He immediately said to me, "You are released only after declaring a state of Emergency, you see!" Can I afford to forget the humorous remark of Anna uttered with a smile of his face?

Similarly I cannot afford to forget the processin held at Chennai on 28 October to honour Anna and myself. I cannot afford to forget also the reception accorded to us on the Beach of Chennai by a sea of people in the meeting presided over by N.V.N.

Since I had straight gone to Chennai on being released from the jail on 26 October 1962, I could not visit my mother who was expecting me with a heavy heart. The insistence of the love of friends had prevented my visit to my mother. Immediately after the release, I took part in a large gathering of people who had met to receive me.

I attended other receptions extended to me at Thanjavur that evening and another at Thiruvarur the next day. Thousands of people had assembled in the railway stations on the way and happily wished me well.

I should have started from Thiruvarur on the morning of 28 October to Chennai. But Anna was at Kancheepuram. He had instructed me, "Come to Kancheepuram for lunch. We could start by the evening and join the procession at Chennai." I did accordingly and went home by midnight after the procession and the meeting. The goddess who had begotten me was waiting all awake at the outer hall with her small mortar meant for mashisng betal leaves and nuts.

Anna had accompanied me. She addressed him, "Anna, my thambi! Perhaps your mother delivered you only after a day’s labour pains. That is why you went immediately after your release from Vellore to meet your mother. But you know, I delivered my boy only after many days of labour pains. Perhaps that is why my boy has come three days after his release from the Trichy jail to meet me, all in a haste." There was the suffering of her helpless anxiety in her humourous remark.

Anna made his very famous speech in the Beach meeting on 28 October. "We can change the tiles only if there is the house. The danger now is to the house itself, you see!" This speech of Arignar Anna has stayed in our hearts for ever like Lincoln’s speech at Gettysburg, Lenin’s speech at Petrograd and the swearing-in speech of Churchill.

"The war being fought now is a war between the philosophies of democracy and and autocracy. Democracy would have a smiling face. Democracy would never exibit the bravery of the novice. Still, it is like a deep river. If one were to step intoit without gauging its depths, he would only be drowned.

"Democracy has great sustaining powers. It also has force enough to strike. What we have today at Peking is not democracy but autocracy. There will be an election. But only one party will be in the fray. There will be only one leader. He would issue statements. His statements will be read to the people and will also be explained. The next statement would also be accompanied by an explanation." This speech proved a hundred per cent that those who should speak about the Chinese Aggression, its effects and the necessity to defeat the aggression, have started speaking.

The right sort of explanations and grand issues which people can understand about the war between democracy and autocracy being fought at the top of the Himalayas in the far north started coming out from the far south Cape Kumari.

If the Chinese Aggression had shocked people, it was equally true that the definite decisions taken by the Kazhagam and the speeches made by its leaders about it made people open mouthed in astonishment.

It was only the DMK which gave the first practical call in the whole country against the Chinese Aggression and appealing to national integration, in 1962.

Besides, the first soldier who gave his life in the battlefield had also been a Tamilan. It had been Selvaraj of Thuthukkuti. The second was Abdul Wahab of Sirkali in Thanjavur District.

The first sacrifice in the battlefield in defence of the country's borders, rich thoughts and financial support all started flowing like a flood towards the Himalayas only from Tamilnadu which was spoken of as sowing the seeds of separation.

I consider that the honour of having collected a huge sum within a few hours on a single day and donated on behalf of one political party in the whole of the country goes only to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

An amount of Rs.35,000/= was collected within a few hours in a meeting convened for the collection of the Defence Fund by me in my capacity as the Treasurer of the Kazhagam at the SIAA Grounds on 2 December. It was then spoken about as a record achievement in the collection of funds on the part of the political parties in India.

It was not only this achievement; it became possible for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam to achieve something else too. Nehru who had understood the sentiments of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam which had been consistently resisting the imposition of Hindi and had also witnessed the fruitful cooperation extended for the effective security of the country arranged for the release of a special advertisement exclusively meant for Tamilnadu, on behalf of the Government of India. Besides, this advertisement was sent to the magazines and newspapers of the Kazhagam contrary to usual practice, with the request that it shall be published.

The caption of the advertisement was, "The Prime Minister's Guarantee".

"English would continue to be an additional language. I will not remove English from the non-Hindi speaking regions until people so desire - Jawaharlal Nehru" - this was the text of the advertisement. It was this text that became an effective shield in the subsequent agitations against Hindi, especially the one launched in 1965. It was at this time when the

Kazhagam and the leaders of the Kazhagam were functioning at various fronts to defeat the aggressors that the Communists mutilated themselves, pitiably caught in a sudden accident.

Chavan, who became the Defence Minister immediately after the removal of Krishna Menon said ridiculing the Communists in his very first speech after assuming office, "It is the Communists and Communism which appear to be pitiably affected by the Chinese Aggression." Communism bowed its head in shame. The Communists started wondering which was the head and which was the tail within their own organization and started quarrelling with each other.

It was not only the Chinese Aggression at the top of the Himalayas but also Kennedy's action against the Russian War Fleet which was surrounded and sropped at the deeps of Atlantic Ocean in the Bay of Pigs which made the Communists pitiable.

Nehru's enthusiasm and Kennedy's daring played equal parts in polarising the Communist world and rendering it weak.

Pakistan which could not bear with our humanistic action for the sake the freedom of the people of Bangla Desh in 1971, declared war against India on 3 December and indulged in direct confrontation.